

and honor the life and legacy of civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, who passed away recently at the age of 92.

Ms. Parks was a daughter, a wife, a mother, a seamstress, who, like all of us, was trying to make a good life for herself and her family. On December 1, 1955, Ms. Parks refused to relinquish her seat to a white man in a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and this simple and courageous action changed the course of American history. Her strength and willingness to take a stand for her rights and those of others sparked the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott and paved the way for the historic 1964 Civil Rights Act banning racial discrimination in public facilities. Ms. Parks' act of courage and bravery inspired the modern civil rights movement that went on to revolutionize our country.

Her steadfast faith in justice and equality, and the power of an individual to initiate change, has served as inspiration and encouragement for equal rights movements the world over. Millions of people with disabilities, and those who are discriminated against around the world, have looked to Ms. Parks' leadership in their claims for equality in the face of injustice. My constituents, and indeed this entire country, are grateful for her strength and courage. We as a country have been made better by the movement Ms. Parks ignited.

Mr. Speaker, in remembering her greatness, her dignity, and her legacy, Members of this House also recently made an historic vote. When this House voted to allow Rosa Parks to lay in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, it marked one of the few occasions a citizen who did not hold public office, and the first time a woman, has been recognized in this way. With that vote, we commemorated more than the great civil rights movement that her act initiated. In bestowing this honor upon Ms. Parks, we recognized that one person, one individual citizen, can have an impact, and can change lives.

Rosa Parks' legacy is one that will lead us in continuing the fight for social justice and the struggle for equality for all people. We must all remain committed to fighting the inequities that remain in our country and to championing fundamental rights for all whether they are voting rights, or a commitment to ending poverty in America. This is the true legacy of Rosa Parks which will live for years and decades to come.

TRIBUTE TO THE REVEREND  
JAMES H. BILLINGTON OF SAN  
MATEO, CALIFORNIA

**HON. TOM LANTOS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 4, 2005*

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me today in paying tribute to the Reverend James H. Billington. For the past 6 years, Rev. Billington has been the Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in San Mateo, California, in my Congressional district, and one of the largest and most important parishes in the State of California. After filling his spiritual calling on the West Coast, Fr. Billington and his family have decided to return to their roots on the East Coast. Though this will be a loss both to his congregation and to our community, I wish Fr.

Billington well in his future endeavors, and I know he will be a tremendous asset to whatever church family or organization he joins next.

Fr. Billington had a remarkably successful tenure at St. Matthew's. From a spiritual perspective, he led a passionate effort to strengthen Sunday School programs for church youth, increased the number and variety of worship services, and was a constant source of love and compassion to his elderly parishioners. He expanded ecumenical outreach by allowing a local Hispanic Pentecostal congregation to use St. Matthew's for their own services. Through his work with the Mills Health Center, he integrated healing services into the church calendar for cancer patients and opened the church during business hours for hospital staff.

Mr. Speaker, Fr. Billington was also very successful in matters of church administration. Despite a substantial increase in unemployment among his parishioners from Silicon Valley, annual giving increased by 37 percent. Through his solid leadership and strict fiscal policies, the church was able to completely retire a long-standing debt that Fr. Billington had inherited when he assumed leadership of the parish. In addition, the historic physical structure of the church was improved through major restorations to the stained glass windows and the organ, and the St. Matthew's Day School was restored to its earlier prominence. To the delight of his parishioners, Fr. Billington restored a previously condemned, church-owned historic landmark building into a community center for contemplative outreach.

An inspired church leader, Fr. Billington is also a gifted intellectual and dedicated humanitarian. His path to the priesthood began in earnest with his enrollment in the Episcopal Divinity School from which he graduated in 1996 with a Master of Divinity degree. Prior to this, he received a BA and an MBA from Harvard University. Before entering the priesthood, Fr. Billington earned several accolades for humanitarian work. He was awarded the Lyndhurst Prize in 1985—an annual award given to only five Americans for outstanding humanitarian contributions. From 1984 to 1986, Fr. Billington served as Director of the Appalachia Habitat for Humanity. In recognition of his extraordinary leadership, his chapter was named a model chapter by the founder, Millard Fuller.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a great pleasure for me to work with Fr. Billington on various community events and to become acquainted on a personal level with his family. His lovely wife Julia is currently a respected physician at Mills Health Center. She previously served as an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Julia's dedication to the San Mateo community mirrors that of her husband's. The two of them have worked together to take on many important projects, including a mission to provide free medical care to those in need. The Billingtons are the happy and proud parents of four boys: James, Adam, Jonathan and Joshua.

Fr. Billington has been an integral part of interfaith efforts that have greatly benefited my congressional district and beyond. He has been aptly described as a true community leader, an outstanding rector, and an all-around humanitarian. After 6 years of tireless service to St. Matthews and the community, Fr. Billington will be deeply missed. His deep

commitment and dedication to the Episcopal Church earned him the highest esteem and trust of all whose lives he touched. His spiritual leadership has brought joy, peace and comfort to his parishioners. His eloquent sermons were an inspiration to all. By engaging his wry sense of humor, he has been able to simplify complex religious issues for his parishioners.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Fr. Billington for his contributions and dedication to public service. I wish him and his family many more years of richly deserved good health and happiness.

HONORING THE 250th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**HON. CHARLES W. DENT**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, November 4, 2005*

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 250th anniversary of the Union United Church of Christ of Neffs, Pennsylvania and to pay tribute to the many contributions its congregation has made to the cultural fabric of the Lehigh Valley.

Established in 1755 by immigrant farmers and craftsmen, the first Union United Church of Christ was constructed on a 100-acre plot of land donated by the Schlosser family of Neffs. As the predominant language in the area, all services at Union Church were conducted in German until 1920 when English began to be incorporated.

Shortly after the church's formation in 1755, America went to war with Britain to gain its independence. Reflecting its role as an important element of the Lehigh Valley's cultural history, several Revolutionary War soldiers from the area are buried in Union Church's old cemetery, including Colonel Stephen Balliet, who commanded American battalions at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown.

In 1797, a new church was built to replace the original log structure that the congregation had been using since 1755. This building, known fondly as "Scrub Oak Church" due to the large number of oak trees in the surrounding hills, later housed the church's Sunday School, which was organized in 1846.

The construction of the congregation's current home, a striking red brick church built in the colonial style of 18th Century England, was completed in 1871 at a price of just over \$35,000.00. A tribute to its wonderful design and preservation, the Union Church is one of the most recognizable and beautiful structures in Lehigh County.

To commemorate their 250th Anniversary, members of Union Church have conducted a year-long celebration that has included a musical program entitled "250 Christmases at Neffs", a series of German heritage events, and an organ concert. While the congregation spent much of the last year honoring their past and celebrating their present, it was their involvement in building a family's future that exemplifies the positive impact this church has always had on life in the Lehigh Valley.

In September 2004, members of Union Church began working with Habitat for Humanity of the Lehigh Valley to renovate the home of a mother and her four sons living in